

## *I Changed My Mind About Golf Cars*

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As told to Ben Chlevin



Tom Walsh

"WE'LL never allow 'golf buggies' at Westgate," was my answer to an enthusiastic electric golf car salesman who called on me three years ago to extol the merits of his company's product and what it would do for golf at our course.

"Golf is a walking game," I said, "and the golfer who's too lazy to stroll through 18 holes of sunbathed fairways while playing the game just isn't a golfer!"

A few months later I received a telephone call from a doctor friend of mine who asked whether we had any golf cars available for use at Westgate. I restrained my natural impulse to explain why and merely said we didn't. He went on to say that one of his patients, a heart case, needed limited exercise and exposure to sunlight as well as something to grip his interest and he felt that golf was the answer, providing his patient didn't have to travel 18 or even 9 holes on foot.

This call made me realize that I had been as unthinking in my attitude toward the golf car as so many people were toward the automobile when it first appeared. I began to wonder whether the golf buggy didn't have its place on the course. I called the salesman and ordered three of the vehicles sent out at the earliest possible moment and hung up before he could question me on the reason for my change of mind!

We now have 14 golf cars available and they're put to good use. We will probably add to this number next year and may not stop there. Here are some incidents that have made the golf buggy a part of Westgate. I think they are significant factors in

the golf picture of the semiprivate courses.

There was the case of the young fellow who walked into the pro shop, paid his green fee and plunked down rental for a golf car. He climbed into it and, to my surprise, instead of heading for the first tee, drove it out to the parking lot, parked it next to his car and then proceeded with great gentleness to carry his lovely young wife from the car to the driver's seat of the buggy. The smile on her face was a sight to behold. She soon got the hang of the controls and away they went to the first tee with his clubs in the back of the buggy. I waited for them to come in and, when the young man drove the car back to the pro shop, I asked him if he enjoyed the round. His enthusiasm was overwhelming:

### Car Solves A Problem

"I thought I was through with golf when my wife was stricken with polio last year. I've spent every spare minute with her and the thought of leaving her for a few hours for golf was impossible — until I heard of your golf cars. This is the first time either of us has been out on a golf course in a year. She wants to come back Tuesday!"

One middleaged golfer whom we used to see only occasionally at Westgate can't praise the cars enough:

"My wife loves golf, loves to get out on the course, but she can't go more than four holes. Now, we play four holes and then she chauffeurs me around the rest of the way and we have a great time!"

There's the case of the father and son combination. The father, in his 80s, had

*(Continued on page 72)*

rest of you; I've got a thousand swings, and each one of them is different." Jack noted that a big gripe among tournament pros is to spend a lot of time practicing on fine turf only to end up playing on tournament courses where turf is thin, fairways are sandy or full of clover or practically devoid of grass. Burke said he cured his hooking miseries by putting his left hand straight on the grip so he can make more use of his right hand.

### Hands High on Backswing

Jackie also told the audience that when he began getting his hands higher on the backswing he eliminated looseness of hands and wristiness.

Toski and Burke discussed how a fellow feels when he's winning. They agreed that desire to win, willingness to work patiently on one's game and make sacrifices to polish one's technique are as essential to a triumphant golf career as hitting the kind of good shots that most golfers can hit fairly often, but not often enough and not always at the right time.

### Golf Cars Are Fine

*(Continued from page 41)*

resigned himself to giving up his favorite game some years ago — just didn't have it in his legs to go more than a few holes. His fifty year old son brought him out one day, rented a golf car for an 18-hole round and now they have a weekly match going. The old man proudly claims he's as young as his son with a car making up the 30-year difference in leg power!

And, there are the golfers who had been playing 9 holes, ran out of gas and never reached the tenth tee — but now are playing 18 holes without puffing.

### Youngsters Use Feet

We occasionally get youngsters at Westgate who want to rent a car. They don't get one. However, the youngster who comes out with his mother, whether she plays or not, gets a buggy without an argument!

In the beginning, like other golf operators, I was concerned about the cars creating a traffic problem on the course and interfering with the play of pedestrian players. Except in very rare cases the cars move right along with the rest of the play. We've learned that the few and minor disadvantages resulting from the use of the cars are far outweighed by the contribution the golf buggy has made to our operation at Westgate Valley!

## Swinging Around Golf

*(Continued from page 19)*

Brown, Des Moines G&CC . . . secy.-treas. is Robert Fry, Ft. Madison CC.

Southeastern PGA re-elects Bill Hall to its presidency . . . With Hall are secy.-treas. Jack Murphy and vps. Bill Barker, Pat Abbott, L. V. Dukes, Ernest Penfold and Joe Burch.

A rather well known pro isn't returning this year to a midwestern metropolitan district club where he has been for several years . . . Says he can't afford working for the club which has about 200 active members and is about top grade for social rating of members, course and clubhouse . . . His payroll for what the club wants will be about \$5000 . . . His shop gross sales last year were \$18,000 (and he's a good salesman) . . . Car and bag cart income was \$3500 . . . Lessons, club storage and cleaning and salary brought revenue up to around \$29,000 . . . He says if he had charged off salaries for himself and his wife on the job and interest on money he had in inventory, his net income per hour wasn't as much as he had to pay an assistant.

Spokane Athletic Round Table's proposal to put on a Seniors' Open in August is a swell idea with a lot of practical difficulties . . . Many of the senior pros will be busy on their club jobs . . . U.S. Seniors, Western Seniors, USGA Seniors and state seniors amateur championships will have the amateur veterans pretty solidly booked for competitions . . . The PGA Seniors made one effort several years back to get a Seniors' open established but the amateur-pro endeavor lacked coordination, publicity and management and flopped.

Chick Monroe, owner of Fairview GC, Ft. Wayne, Ind., has bought 9-hole Decatur (Ind.) CC from Don McLean . . . Lou Bola's departure from Highland CC pro job at Indianapolis to go with his president's company is a distinct loss to pro golf . . . Lou's service as Indiana PGA president for several years was of great value to his pro colleagues.

Lakewood GC's 2nd annual senior invitation tournament, Jan. 2-4, drew a field of 62 to the de luxe Point Clear, Ala., club . . . Senior Bowl football game at Mobile, Jan. 5, brought group of sports writers, sportscasters and pro football scouts to join in merry dinner at the club, Jan. 3 . . . Course brought by Supt. Ted Booterbaugh to fine condition despite date being a bit early for rye greens . . . Pro Andy Mortimer and his staff gave visitors top treatment in locker and caddy assignments, pairing and starting time arrangements and care of clubs between rounds . . . Harry Peters, Point Clear's Grand Hotel mgr., put on a memorable Gulf Coast shore dinner.

V. James Vigiotti, supt. at High Ridge CC, Pound Ridge, N.Y., retires after 35 years of valuable service in course maintenance and